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LETTERS TO THE STAR

Disorder on Hill

It is unfortunate that the students who went to Cuba were so foolish in their actions at the House Un-American Activities Committee hearing that they obscured their own story. If their purpose was to be defiant, they succeeded. But if their purpose was to tell a story to the American public, I'm afraid they failed badly. Most of the news stories told about the "riots started by a bunch of beatniks."

I wonder, however, if Chairman Willis was entirely blameless. A good chairman can usually anticipate trouble and head it off, if he wants to. I wonder how much goading it takes to stir up such a disturbance. In any case, the students certainly played into the hands of those who might be witch-hunting.

Finally, the news media characteristically played up the riots while the actual testimony was on the inside pages.

These students have a story which deserves the attention of the country. It is true they received the red carpet treatment, and may not have seen the people. It is true that the students may harbor prejudices and may not have the back-

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ground for proper perspective (does Chairman Willis?). But it is also true that they have a better first hand knowledge of Cuba today than do 99 per cent of the American public. And it is true that Castro, unlike Batista, is at least trying to raise the standard of living in Cuba. And it is equally true that our sources of information about Cuba are completely lopsided (witness the CIA Memo.)

We may not agree with Castro and we may (once we have heard their story) not agree with the students. But we owe it to ourselves to listen. Let us hope that Chairman Willis will, as he said he might, call for more hearings on the subject, and let us hope that this time the students will avoid defiance. The committee will seek to find the facts, the news media will seek to present an honest interpretation, and the public will attempt to understand the differing views.

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